

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**MARIST SCHOOL,
MT. ALBERT**

21-22 OCTOBER, 2015

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name:	Marist School, Mt Albert
Address:	14 Kitenui Ave, Mt Albert, Auckland 1025
School Type:	Contributing School, Boys and Girls Y1-6
Principal:	Ms Catherine Ryan
Director of Religious Studies:	Ms Marie Walker
Board of Trustees Chairperson:	Mr Justin Graham
Parish Priest:	Fr. Sateki Raass
Reviewers:	Mr Neil Laurenson Mrs Colleen Gleeson
Accompanying Principal	Mrs Jane Hahn
Current Roll:	305
Report Confirmed:	

The National Administration Guidelines (NAG 2) requires all schools to develop a Strategic Plan, maintain a programme of self review and report to the community. In Catholic Schools this process must include provision for the maintenance and development of Catholic Special Character. The review and development cycle includes annual internal self review of a key dimension of Catholic Special Character as well as an external review every four years.

The purpose of the external review is to provide assurance to the Proprietor that the school has appropriate systems in place to deliver education with a Catholic Special Character in terms of the following three Key Dimensions:

Catholic Community: Te Iwi Whanui Katorika

The extent to which the school is a Christian community where Gospel values are central, where faith is nourished, and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.

Pastoral Care: Manaakitanga

The extent to which the school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

Religious Education: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

The extent to which the school helps to fulfil the teaching Mission of the Church.

As well as the key dimensions, the Reviewers look at the school's process for self-review and how areas for development are incorporated into the school's Development Plan. In carrying out this review, the Reviewers had access to relevant documentation, interviewed staff, Board of Trustee members, parents and students and visited all classrooms.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY: Te Iwi Whanau Katorika

The extent to which the school is a Christian community where Gospel values are central, where faith is nourished, and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.

Marist School, Mt Albert warmly welcomed and embraced the opportunity for review and development. The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, students, parents and parish community welcomed the reviewers and all shared openly their thoughts and opinions.

Situated in central Auckland at the base of Mt Albert, the school serves the parish of St Mary's, Mt Albert. The school shares a limited site with the Church, Presbytery, Marist College and the Marist Sister's convent.

SPIRITUALITY

The individual and communal spirituality of the whole school community is promoted and nurtured.

The spirituality of Marist School is seen in the way staff and students relate to each other, welcome visitors and support each other and the wider community. Through its charism and values it provides encouragement and resources for individuals within the school community to develop their own faith journey. The reviewers spoke to many groups within the school and parish community, all of whom were 'proud to be Catholic' and had a strong Marist spirit.

EVANGELISATION

The school is a faith community which endeavours to spread the Good News by word and witness

The school proclaims the mission and Gospel of Jesus Christ. Parents spoke of how welcome they feel at the school and the strong sense of family, warmth and caring which provides a nurturing environment for the personal, spiritual growth of children.

Through the sacramental programme run by the Parish it was noted that some parents of the children at school were being Confirmed at the same time as the children.

PARTNERSHIP

Education is a collaborative responsibility.

The Principal, staff and Board of Trustees work to build strong relationships with families, the Parish community and the wider community. The partnership with parents is continually being developed through effective communication and learning conversations.

Marist School has a long and important partnership with the Marist Sisters. The sisters live adjacent to the school and provide a wonderful connection to the charism with their presence in the school. One of the sisters hears children read on a regular basis and they are invited to all school events.

The Parent, Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) is a strong group of parents who meet monthly to organise fundraising and social events for the school community. They organise fundraising such as sausage sizzles, quiz nights and entertainment books. They work with parents to build community by chatting to parents before and after school and hosting a morning tea for new parents. The PTFA run a second hand uniform shop and all proceeds go to the school for pastoral care needs. They communicate with the community through the school newsletter and a Facebook page. Plans are for a representative in each classroom to be appointed in 2016 to liaise with parents.

A home/school partnership was spoken about by parents who felt they were part of the school's prayer life and were given many opportunities to share in school life.

Marist School has a partnership with the Mt Albert community and in particular with the YMCA who support the school in many activities, the latest being the fish mosaic on the front fence as part of a community initiative.

Marist School has built strong partnerships with local Catholic and state schools. They work closely with Marist and St Peter's Colleges where the majority of the students go to in Year 7. In response to the 2011 External Special Catholic Character Review report, the school is working towards their strategic goal of building stronger partnerships with Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay and Marist College, each of which has the same Marist charism.

VALUES

The school identifies and actively promotes Gospel values.

Marist School, Mt Albert has identified the Gospel values of *Excellence - Kairangi, Integrity - Pono, Respect - Whakaute and Equity – Mana Taurite* as their core values:

These values can be found in the school's Charter and displayed in each classroom. The children were very familiar with these values and were able to articulate to the reviewers what they looked like in action. It is suggested that a Gospel passage or quote be attached to these values to give them context.

Playground tickets are awarded to children seen to be living the values and the Marist Way. One ticket is selected at each assembly and the winner gets 'first rights' to a selection of fun games.

SCHOOL CULTURE

Catholic Special Character is visible in the relationships and the artistic expression seen throughout the school.

"In the spirit of Mary we educate, nurture and live Catholic values and guide each child to reach their potential."

(Marist School Mission statement)

Marist School follows the charism of The Marist Sisters. Founded by the Marist Sisters in 1927, the school has a strong history of Marist values and traditions. In response to the 2011 External Special Catholic Character Review report, the 'Marist Way' is well explained in all documentation and the parents, teachers and students are able to articulate what it is to be a Marist school and to live in

“Te Wairua o Maria, the Spirit of Mary”. The children could explain the emblem and its Marist focus. The school celebrates Marist Week annually. It is suggested that along with the Marist charism teaching it is emphasised that “the school exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ” and is Christ-centered. This needs to be documented along with the Marist charism.

The school foyer has a Marist charism display. Classroom, corridor and foyer displays depict the Special Catholic Character of the school through colourful and attractive artwork, displays and symbols. The displays are relevant to the school’s history, vision and the current work being done in classrooms.

The school has a strong sense of family. The Principal and teachers know every child by name and ensure they form strong relationships with each of the families. Parents commented that they liked the school because it is a ‘strong community with a family feel’. Many students have parents and grandparents who also attended the school and have a strong sense of belonging.

The senior children interviewed by the Reviewers commented that the school was warm and welcoming, a small community where each person is unique. They have many varied opportunities and it is a very caring environment. The children also spoke about the fact that most children met at preschool and have worked together through 6 years of primary school and the boys and girls all go to the same respective secondary colleges.

The partnership between church and school as one Catholic community was an important aspect for parents. It was evident to the reviewers that Marist School was very child-centered. The children are at the centre of everything and they and their parents have ownership and are actively involved.

The four houses, recently introduced, represent three Marist sisters: Sr Chavoin, the founder of the order and Srs Bernard and Austin who established Marist School Mt Albert. The fourth house is named after Bishop Pompallier, the first Bishop of Auckland.

Marist School has put careful planning into the school environment. It has limited space and uses that space effectively. The school is waiting for a major building programme to begin and are now using the school library as a classroom because of roll growth. They have plans for the environment once the new buildings are completed. They are preparing for collaborative, innovative spaces in the new building by opening classrooms between two teachers. Some teachers are beginning to collaborate and are working to introduce a student managed pedagogy and flexible timetable.

“We are surrounded in faith and love by the parish, parent community and people involved in the school”.

“A strength of this school is the wonderful, respectful children we have”
(Senior Management Team interview comment)

LEADERSHIP

Leadership effectively shapes the faith-based vision, values and outcomes of the school programme.

The Principal of Marist School, Mt Albert is an experienced Principal who has very successfully led the school for 2 years. Her commitment and passion for providing a quality Catholic education that is relevant to the students of Marist School is evident in her words and actions and was acknowledged by the Board of Trustees and parents. She reports monthly to the Board of Trustees against the Strategic Goals, including the Catholic Character.

The Principal has an excellent rapport with parents and is very visible around the school, is approachable and has an open door policy. She has a strong vision for the school and is supported by the school community who share in her vision and her high expectations.

The Chairperson ably leads a Board of Trustees who has the Special Catholic Character at heart. They were able to express how the school's Catholic Special Character impacted on their role of governance. The Board has many new members who are committed to the development of the school.

The Board of Trustees is representative of the school community and has participated in regular training with the School Trustee Association, Catholic Education Services workshops and Ministry of Education webinars. They have also completed two half-day sessions on the Marist Charism. They have a page on the school's website and report to the community through a Board of Trustees newsletter called the 'BOT Pinboard'.

A Special Character Committee includes the Proprietor Representatives, including the Parish Priest, who liaise with the Principal and the Director of Religious Studies. In response to the 2011 External Special Catholic Character Review report, they meet to ensure that Catholic Special Character Compliances and self review reports are completed in a timely manner.

The school communicates to parents through the weekly newsletter which includes the Principal's reflection on relevant events in the liturgical season, current events in the Catholic Church and the school's Religious Education programme. The newsletter is posted on the school website.

STEWARDSHIP

The school accepts responsibility for delivering education with a Special Catholic Character.

The Board of Trustees recognise their responsibility to ensure that the Catholic Special Character permeates the whole curriculum and the school environment. They understand that partnership with the parents and parish is an important aspect in developing an effective school environment.

The Charter and Strategic plan has a very strong Catholic Special Character content in the Strategic goals. The Board of Trustees should continue to ensure that the Special Catholic Character of the school is embedded throughout each policy.

New teachers are inducted into the Special Catholic Character and particular ethos of the school by the Principal and the Director of Religious Studies. The staff work closely together and teachers commented that there was always someone there to help when needed.

The annual self review process is led by the Director of Religious Studies and Principal. This year the focus is on Pastoral Care. They liaise with the Special Catholic Character committee who ensure that staff, parent and student voice is included, usually through surveys. The Director of Religious Studies presents the draft report to the Committee who endorse it and present it to the Board of Trustees. Results are shared and explored with the staff, Board of Trustees and parent community. This then becomes Part C of the Annual Proprietors Report to the Bishop.

In response to the 2011 External Special Catholic Character Review report, each teacher has a Special Catholic Character goal in their performance agreement and clear guidelines are set for

teaching Religious Education and these are monitored throughout the year by the teacher's appraiser. All teachers are attested against professional standards which include Special Catholic Character standards.

The Special Catholic Character Compliances are all fulfilled. The school has one tagged position to be filled by a vacancy being advertised before the end of year. It is well within the 5% of non-preference students and the majority of its children are 5.1 criteria for preference.

The Board of Trustees is aware of its obligation to consult with its community in relation to Maori, ethnic groups, general academic achievement, and the Health curriculum. It is recommended that the Board look at ways to consult with the community and establish a programme of consultation

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

A Catholic culture of prayer. Liturgy and faith-based celebration is promoted in the school.

The reviewers joined six classes for prayers during their visit. These prayers were student led at all levels of the school and the students were reverent and respectful of this sacred time. The children were focused using candles and Bibles placed on a liturgical cloth of green, appropriate to the liturgical season. A variety of methods to pray is used throughout the school including meditation, song, traditional and personal prayers. Staff prayers are held each Thursday morning during morning tea and teachers are rostered to prepare these prayers. Prayers are also said at the beginning of all meetings. Classes take turns to lead the school in prayer at assemblies.

The reviewers were privileged to be welcomed to the school at a full school liturgy. This was child centred and the children participated fully with readings, prayers, responses and beautiful singing. The reviewers were impressed with the clarity and confidence of the children throughout this presentation.

School Masses are held each term and in Term 3 this year a combined Parish and School Mass, on a Sunday, was celebrated for the first time. Once per term a class joins the parish for their Wednesday morning Mass. Masses or liturgies are also held on special feast days.

All Sacramental programmes are organised and implemented by the Parish. It is suggested that the Sacrament of Reconciliation Rite 2 is organised for children during Lent and Advent, depending on availability of priests.

Prayer Kete have recently been introduced and are sent home with one child from each class at a time. The children are encouraged to use the kete contents to support family prayer. The Prayer kete contains a liturgical coloured cloth, a cross, candle, bible and prayers.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The school promotes social justice.

Marist School provides many opportunities for the students to develop an awareness of others, of issues in and beyond their immediate community and an empathy for those who are hurt and

suffering. It contributes to raising awareness and action for justice within the school and the wider community.

The school supports several charities including Caritas appeals, the Muleimi School in Africa and a World Vision sponsored child. They raise funds for areas where disaster has struck and for special emergencies, such as Nepal and Vanuatu. Non perishable items are also collected throughout the year for the parish food bank.

The fundraising and ideas are generated by the children for the appeals that are relevant to them. The Marist in Action team organised a backpack run and raffle to raise funds for Nepal. One staff member is Nepalese and this resonated with the school.

The Marist Mission Market Day is a well established school event that the children organise and run to raise money for a specific need. The children were very proud of the fact that they raised enough money this year for a classroom to be built at the Muleimi School. The money raised was presented to a family in the parish who were going there to work. They received feedback and photos from the school.

A speaker from Caritas addresses the school each year for the Lenten appeal and Caritas resources are used in classrooms. A parent also speaks to the school about LOGOS – Marist Youth Development and their programmes available for children.

COLLABORATION WITH THE PARISH

The school collaborates with the Parish of which it is part.

The Parish of St Mary's Mt Albert welcomes the school's presence.

"There has been a much greater involvement of the school with the Parish life and community these last two years, and the Parish is a richer one as a result. We certainly will continue dialogue with the school in the hope of fostering this community and catholic spirit. We hope to do more together and assist the school where possible in its fostering the Catholic teachings and gospel values, and seeing more of our community doing things together."

(Parish survey response)

The Board of Trustees sees having the Parish Priest interested and supportive, as very relevant to the school/parish relationship. The Parish Priest is also a member of the Board of Trustees and is on the Special Character committee. The school has a representative on the Parish Council.

The Parish website includes information about the school. The school newsletter includes any special parish news. It is suggested that both parish and school websites have a link to the others' website.

Marist School children are trained by the Parish as altar servers for parish and school Masses. The Parish runs the Sacramental Programme. The school supports the children participating in the programme. The Parish use the school facilities on a Sunday. On the day of celebration the school supports in any way they can.

The Parish Priest is on the Board of Trustees and attends most school events. He joins the school when he is available. A Seminarian has visited the school regularly, worked in classrooms and supported the school in all events for a few months of this year.

Many of the teachers are parishioners of St Mary's Parish. They are seen at Sunday Masses and contribute in various ministries within the church as a model for children. Parishioners and the Marist Sisters are invited to all school events.

"We feel like we are very strongly connected to this school community, in part because of its close connections with our parish."

(Parent survey comments)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That the Board look at ways to consult with the community and establish a programme of consultation.

AREAS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That a Gospel passage or quote be attached to the core values to give them context.
- That along with the Marist charism teaching it is emphasised that "the school exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ" and is Christ-centered.
- The Board of Trustees should continue to ensure that the Special Catholic Character of the school is embedded throughout each policy.
- That the Sacrament of Reconciliation Rite 2 is organised for children during Lent and Advent, depending on availability of priests.
- That both parish and school websites have a link to the others' website.

PASTORAL CARE: **Manaakitanga**

The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

RELATIONSHIPS

The school is a friendly, welcoming, co-operative learning environment where the dignity of each person is respected

As visitors to the school, the reviewers experienced warm and generous hospitality from all members of the school community. Parents acknowledged that teachers were hard working, approachable and respectful to them and their children. All teachers had a warm, gentle and caring

relationship with the children. The children were exceptionally friendly, happy and respectful of each other and the environment.

The Board of Trustees, staff, parents and Parishioners happily work together with respect and co-operation to provide a nurturing environment. This teamwork and collaboration makes for a happy and cohesive Catholic learning environment.

The support staff spoken to by the reviewers felt valued and saw that they were an important part of the staff. They receive training where appropriate to their role and receive ongoing support from the staff and especially the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Staff feel supported by the school community in times of need.

Parents are welcomed into the school and acknowledged as first teachers of their children. The Principal and staff work tirelessly to guide and support all parents and caregivers and to build a partnership of support for each child.

Staff and children show an empathy and care for each other. New children are introduced to a "Playground Angel" who introduces them to the school at their first assembly. They are presented with a house badge and prayer book, the Playground Angel receives a badge also. These 'Angels' establish a strong relationship throughout the year. The staff and parents see this Tuakana/Teina partnership as a strength of the school.

"Children are inclusive and mix seamlessly across the school".

(Staff questionnaire response)

The school has an inclusive environment where all children are acknowledged for their special talents. They work closely with a variety of outside agencies including Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) and the Health Nurse. Reading Recovery, Rainbow Reading, STEPs, ESOL, Alpha to Omega, literacy and maths programmes support children with their learning. Individual Education Plans are developed by the class teacher, RTLB and the SENCO when relevant.

To extend and enhance learning, children are given every opportunity to share their talent. During the Review visit a student won a placing in the national "Doodle for Google" competition. Prior to the review a schoolwide Photography competition was run and the winner went on to win a national competition for photography.

ORGANISATION

The way pastoral care is organised is evident to all members of the school community.

During the review visit, the reviewers heard of the many times care and support was given to families and individuals. At Marist School, the Principal and staff ensure that all families know of the support they can receive. The new PTFA classroom representatives, being established in 2016, will be helpful in ensuring that communication between the school and home is effective. At staff meetings needs of students and families are discussed when necessary.

"The office and support staff optimise the face of Marist to the community".

(Staff questionnaire comment)

Support is provided to staff and families in times of need with the provision of transport, donations, prayers, cards and flowers.

BI-CULTURAL COMMITMENT

The school is committed to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Marist School recognises the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Maori as Tangata Whenua. At the beginning of each year a unit on the Treaty of Waitangi establishes a link with biculturalism. At the welcoming liturgy for the Review Team the children prayed and sang in Maori.

The school emblem shows its commitment to Maori with the koru pattern within the cross. A School Strategic Plan goal is to hold a whanau hui to consult with Maori parents.

Classroom teachers endeavour to integrate Maori language through the day through instructions and displays. A Kapa Haka group is being established. Maori Language week is acknowledged each year. The school has recently named their teams: Tuakana (seniors), Waenga (Middle) and Teina (Juniors) in consultation with the Maori community to ensure the names were relevant and appropriate.

It is suggested that the school develop a progressive Maori curriculum encompassing Te Reo and Tikanga Maori from Year 1 to Year 6, in consultation with their Maori community.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

The school recognises and honours cultural diversity.

Marist School is aware of the many diverse cultures of its community and acknowledges these cultures with children praying in their own languages and establishing a Pasifika cultural group, which performed at the welcome liturgy for the reviewers.

A goal in the Strategic Plan states that a Pasifika fono will be held to consult with the Pacific Island community.

“Diversity is well accepted in the school, nobody notices differences”.

(Parent interview comment)

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.

The ‘Marist Way – Golden Rules’ have been developed based on the charism and Marist values. These rules are in the front of each child’s Religious Education journal and displayed in each classroom. The children know these rules and generally live by them.

The emphasis is that children take ownership of their own behaviour and this was demonstrated in the way the older children modelled appropriate behaviour for the younger children. All teachers have had training in “Incredible Years” ensuring that the language used with children and the way situations are dealt with are consistent across the school.

SERVICE

The students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities provided by the school.

Marist School provides leadership opportunities throughout the school. All children are given the opportunity to lead prayer and act as monitors in their own classrooms.

Each Year 6 student has a leadership role. There are House Captains, Knowledge Nesters, Gamers, Angels, Student Council, Travelwise and Wastewise leaders, Beanstalks, Road Patrol, Librarians and the Marist in Action team. The school runs one full day and two half days of leadership training for the Year 6 children. Many children serve the parish community as altar servers and giving food items for the Foodbank.

The school provides Outreach to the community visiting the elderly to show their work and talk to them. The school choir sings at the local rest home. The Beanstalks are a group who work with the local YMCA to tend community gardens. The school also has a ‘Walking Bus’.

RECOMMENDATION FOR PASTORAL CARE DEVELOPMENT

- That the school develop a progressive Maori curriculum encompassing Te Reo and Tikanga Maori from Year 1 to Year 6, in consultation with their Maori community.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

The school helps to fulfil the teaching mission of the Church.

LEADERSHIP

The Principal and the Director of Religious Studies provide leadership and sound management in Religious Education.

The Director of Religious Studies has taught at Marist School, Mt Albert for 17 years with the last 3 years as Director of Religious Studies. She works collaboratively with the Principal, staff and Parish personnel to ensure that a strong partnership exists between the school and parish. Her quiet and

gentle approach to the job ensures that professional development, liturgies and other important religious occasions are carried out efficiently and calmly. She is a valued member of the Senior Management Team and ensures the Special Catholic Character is maintained in all work and decisions.

The Director of Religious Studies oversees the planning and preparation of all full school Masses and celebrations. She has refined a model used to organise Masses and liturgies which ensures that jobs are shared across the school. She supports new teachers to the school and teachers new to Catholic schools. She liaises with the Special Character Committee. She leads the internal Special Catholic Character self-review process with the Principal and reports back to the Special Character Committee.

The Director of Religious Studies facilitates staff meetings, using Strand material, which are based on the theological focus. She works with outside agencies to build the social justice aspect of school life.

Observations of prayers in each classroom are completed by the Director of Religious Studies each year. Some observations of Religious Education lessons have been completed. It is suggested that the Director of Religious Studies works with the Principal to ensure that release time is adequate and provided at appropriate times to enable observations of all teachers teaching Religious Education each year. These observations could be timetabled at the start of each year.

She meets regularly with the Principal to keep her informed and to discuss issues when necessary. As the Director of Religious Studies is a full time classroom teacher she is an excellent model for teachers and shares her skills and knowledge freely.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM *The Religious Education programme is professionally delivered.*

“Marist School provides an education with Special Character reflecting the Catholic faith and the charism of the Marist Sisters, its founding order.”

(Catholic Character Policy)

This statement emphasises the high priority of the Special Catholic Character at Marist School, Mt Albert.

The classroom and foyer displays throughout the school were evidence that Religious Education and the Special Catholic Character are at the forefront of all learning. The Religious Education Curriculum is very full, the strands and modules are well covered and the Special Catholic Character is being integrated into all curriculum planning. A Religious Education section is part of the ‘Home Learning’ sheets each term.

Teachers plan their Religious Education programmes in teams and pretest children to ensure they pitch their lessons correctly for their own class year level. The planning was consistent throughout the school. Teachers endeavour to differentiate tasks according to age and ability. The planning and pedagogy for Religious Education aligns well with that of all other curriculum areas using teacher-inquiry and formative practice. The team leaders view teacher planning regularly. The Director of Religious Education checks teacher evaluations and talks to teachers about their comments when necessary.

An emphasis is placed on the Religious Education journals the students use in response to the teaching and learning. Teachers were introducing creative ways for children to respond to the learning. The students were proud of their work and very willing to discuss and reflect on what they had done and what they had learned with the reviewers. The journals, viewed by the reviewers, were beautifully presented across all levels of the school.

At the start of each Strand the achievement objectives are pasted into each child's journal. At the end of each strand the journals go home for a comment by the child, parent and teacher.

The children spoken to by reviewers, at all levels of the school, were able to talk about their learning, how they were learning and why. The teacher's use of WALTs and the learning talk they used throughout the day was reflected by the children.

Some teachers are using 'Blendspace' to share the resources with the children. This innovative idea is a way to share teacher planning and resources.

The learning environments were all vibrant and the displays were relevant to the Religious Education Strand being covered.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

Catholic teaching is integrated with other curriculum areas.

At Marist School the teachers plan a key understanding based on the Gospel and all unit planning is based on this key understanding. This year the key understanding is "Let your light shine". Each topic is linked to a core value, the Religious Education programme and the Special Character of the school is integrated where possible. It was evident in classrooms that a Catholic perspective was integrated whenever possible through all curriculum areas.

The school ensures that a Catholic perspective is provided throughout the Health Curriculum. A Pubertal Change programme is delivered to Year 6 children by an outside agent. The 'Myself and Others' module is integrated throughout the health programme. Keeping Ourselves Safe, and Life Education are delivered to enhance the Health Curriculum. Children drink water in class throughout the day and stop for 'brain food' at regular intervals and are encouraged to have litterless lunches.

Marist School is aware of the environment and is a Wastewise school. They recycle paper, waste and have a worm farm and compost bin. The school is also a Sunsmart and Travelwise school.

The school provides many opportunities for extra curricula activities. A school choir is assembled for the World Vision Kids for Kids Concert. The school employs a part time teacher to organise sports training and games, she took some children on a "Mud Run" and also trained children for a fun run and a children's marathon.

RESOURCES

The school makes financial provision for Religious Education and Catholic Special Character resources.

The school is well resourced and the Director of Religious Studies ensures that all classrooms have the necessary resources to deliver the Religious Education programme and provide an environment that reflects the Special Catholic Character.

The Religious Education Advisors are used by the school to support beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools and to run staff meetings when requested and their resources are well used.

An ample budget is set aside each year to provide for all resources and professional development. The school makes excellent use of the Information Technology they have. There are desktop computers in each room, laptops, and i-pads. A data projector is used in all rooms and YouTube clips, the Digital Resource and the Faith Alive website are used by all teachers to enhance the Religious Education programme.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school provides opportunities for regular Religious Education professional development and spiritual formation for staff.

The Director of Religious Studies ensures that Religious Education professional development is given time in all staff meetings, when appropriate and facilitates Strand meetings at the beginning of each Strand. All teachers are encouraged to attend the Cluster meetings provided by the Religious Education Advisors and discuss the ideas in relation to their school as a team.

In response to the 2011 External Special Catholic Character review report all teachers complete at least 12 hours of Religious Education professional development each year. The Principal reports to the Board of Trustees on all Religious Education Professional Development each month. The beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools attend the professional development provided by the Diocese. All teachers have completed two days of the Diocesan "Understanding Sexuality" course and attended the "Mary Matters" enrichment day.

Three teachers have completed post graduate leadership papers through Mindlab and UNITEC this year with three more starting next year. One teacher based her paper on Leadership as a Director of Religious Education.

Professional development for the Marist Charism has been led by a Marist Sister, the Director of Religious Studies of Marist College and the Director of Religious Studies of the school.

The Director of Religious Studies attends all DRS days and the DRS Conference. The Principal attends Principal Development days and the ACPPA conference. The Senior Management Team attend the ACPPA Middle Management day. The Senior Management Team also attended the Catholic Convention in Wellington in July.

Teachers are all encouraged to work towards Certification. One teacher is at Graduate Level, Three teachers have achieved Endorsed Leadership Level. Three have Leadership level. One teacher has Classroom Level and all other teachers are working towards Classroom Level.

COMMUNICATION

The school communicates with parents/caregivers about Religious Education.

The Principal shares her faith through the weekly school newsletters “The NewsFlash”, she includes explanations about Liturgical seasons and feasts. The school’s website is informative and updated regularly. The Board of Trustees send a newsletter, “The BOT Pinboard” twice per year reporting on governance. Each team sends home a newsletter at the beginning of each term setting out the Strands and Modules to be covered during that term. A group of senior students publish a newsletter, “Marist Moments”, each term. Newsletters and notices are all placed on the school website.

The children’s Religious Education books are sent home at the end of each Strand for parents to discuss with their children. Parents commented that these books were an excellent way of knowing what their children were learning in Religious Education.

At the New Entrant parent meetings, held each term, the Religious Education programme is introduced and explained. The programme is also outlined, by the Director of Religious Studies, at the Parent Teacher meeting held early each year.

Parents are invited to join their children for classroom prayers and parents and parishioners are invited to all school liturgies and Masses. Parents join their children at their first school assembly where they are welcomed into the Marist family. The Principal chats to parents informally whenever she sees them. The open door and welcoming attitude at the school invites parents and the parish to participate and contribute.

AREAS FOR PASTORAL CARE DEVELOPMENT

- That the Director of Religious Studies works with the Principal to ensure that release time is adequate and provided at appropriate times to enable observations of all teachers teaching Religious Education each year.

CONCLUSION

Marist School, Mt Albert provides a child-centred, Catholic, nurturing learning environment. The school has enthusiastic staff, supportive families, a good connection with the Parish and children who have a love of learning and who love coming to school. The strong spiritual and academic leadership of the Principal has brought all of these components together to form a happy and successful Catholic School community.

The Board of Trustees, parents, teachers and children have a clear understanding of the school's goals and all members of the school community live by the Marist charism.

The senior children interviewed by the reviewers are living testament that the school is achieving what the community aspires to in their Vision Statement:

"Marist children, inspired by the spirit of Mary, are confident life-long learners."

The children are confident, happy, friendly and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are proud to be members of Marist School.

"From the Pope's words in the newsletters to the reverent prayers in the classrooms. I see God at Marist School."

"The sense of community at Marist Primary is the greatest strength, and this is a reflection of the Principal, staff and families who all embody the Catholic Special Character".

(Parent survey comment)

Neil Laurenson
Manager
Catholic Education Services

Colleen Gleeson
Review and Development Officer
Catholic Schools Office

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